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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA'S NEW CABINET: MINISTER FOR
TRANSPORTATION, INNOVATION, AND TECHNOLOGY DORIS BURES

REF: VIENNA 1772

¶1. The following is a profile of new Minister for
Transportation, Innovation and Technology Doris Bures, A
member of the Social Democratic Party (SPO).

Experience

¶2. This is the second ministerial appointment for
Bures, sworn in December 2 as Austria's new
transport/technology minister. In the Gusenbauer
cabinet (2007-2008), she served as Federal Minister for
Women's Issues, Media and the Civil Service in the
Federal Chancellery. Except for that appointment and
her function as head of Parliament's Construction
Committee, Bures has experience only in Social
Democratic party roles as SPO party manager and as SPO
Member of Parliament -- and no experience in any of the
areas that she now covers which include road, rail, and
air transport; postal / telecom issues; and
research/science.

¶3. Bures was born August 3, 1962, in Vienna. After
high school, she trained as a dentist's assistant. She
started her political career in 1980 in the Federal
Secretariat of the Social-Democratic Party's (SPO) Youth
Movement. Bures managed a project for unemployed youth
(1985-86), worked in the youth department of the City of
Vienna (1987-88), and was a councilwoman in the Vienna
district of Liesing (1987-90). From 1990 to 2007, Bures
was Member of Parliament and for many years head of the
parliament's Construction Committee. Concurrently, she
was President of Austria's Tenant Association from 1997
to 2007 and one of three SPO Party Managers under Party
Chairman Alfred Gusenbauer from 2000 to 2007. From
March 2007 to July 2008, she was Federal Minister for
Women's issues, Media and the Civil Service in the
Federal Chancellery. Bures survived the collapse of the
Gusenbauer-Molterer coalition and the party reshuffle
when Werner Faymann took over as SPO party chairman: she
was asked to become SPO Party Manager in the spring of
2007, and was re-elected to Parliament in September.

Political/Economic Views

¶4. Previously known as a close ally of former
Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer, Bures now follows in the
footsteps of current Chancellor Faymann who headed the
ministry from 2007 to 2008 (but did not distinguish
himself in that role). Unlike Faymann -- viewed as a
non-ideological pragmatist and networker -- Bures is
known as a vocal SPO ideologue who is sometimes
divisive.

¶5. Bures' biggest short-term issue is restructuring the postal service, which must be liberalized under European Union rules in the face of union resistance. She has ruled out privatizing the Federal Railroad company (OeBB) but is willing to discuss a strategic partner for its cargo business. OeBB has a number of problems including debts of over EUR 12 billion and huge potential write-offs from speculative financial dealings. On road transport, she ruled out the introduction of general road pricing (distance-dependent road tolls) but advocates higher truck tolls.

¶6. Science is unlikely to be Bures' forte, since R&D portfolios are split between her ministry, the Ministry of Science and Research, and the Economics Ministry. She promised to work for more R&D funds to achieve the GoA goal to raise R&D spending to 3% of GDP by 2010 and 4% by 2020. Currently, Austria's total R&D spending is around 2.6%.

Personal

¶7. Bures lives with a partner and has one daughter. She is reputed to be a workaholic and her only known hobby is jogging.

GIRARD-DICARLO